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LB 540

appreciate the discussion. And this is a very confusing area, as anyone in here...anyone in the body who has been here some time will admit. And Senator Raikes will say that as well. I appreciate his leadership on the issue. I think that he's done a fantastic job and he has recognized that this is one of the areas of significant growth in the budget, and he's doing what he thinks that he needs to do to try to control that. And I appreciate that, and control it, by that I mean addressing our budget situation. But what I'm suggesting to you is LB 540, by holding it to zero growth, artificially reduces, on paper anyway, the needs of our schools. We made a commitment a number of years ago that the needs formula would increase by 2.5 percent per year. And so just as...you know, if you're a farmer, just as if you don't repair that tractor, you go for two years without repairing anything or adding any money or replacing the tires or the brakes, well, that need didn't go away. So two years or four years down the road, instead of putting \$500 into it, you're going to have to put \$3,000 into it to make it whole again, and that's what I'm suggesting we're doing with our state aid formula. All I'm saying is that we agreed to a 2.5 percent growth in needs a number of years ago, 10 or 12 years ago. Yes, let's hold it at zero for the next four years because we have to. Our budget situation requires that. But let's also allow our schools to track what that need would have been but for the passage of LB 540. As I mentioned, there's no requirement that we change our appropriations to schools in four years, based on my amendment. It simply says what the needs would have been in four years had we not adopted LB 540. I think it's simple. It does not add again. Our appropriation does not increase. It does not increase the requirement that we fund it at a certain level. It simply says let's track it. Senator Wehrbein talked a little bit about the out years. And, yes, if this amendment is adopted, it's going to add to the number in the out years, absolutely. But doesn't mean that that's our commitment. And I would suggest to you that adding the growth factor in the out years presents probably a more real number than if we hold it at 0 percent. And had I an opportunity, I was going to ask Senator Wehrbein a little bit about that. But we've had a good discussion this morning. Senator Raikes is aware of the problem. He has acknowledged that. The needs will go up, even though we're artificially